XII

THE PORTS OF ADEN AND SHIHR (Mediaeval Period)*

Aden, Shihr and Zufar are the three main ports of the southern coast of Arabia, but there is a host of minor ports and anchorages known to mariners. Zufar is much less important than the other two and very little is known about it even today : in any case it has generally been linked to, sometimes controlled by Shihr. Then again, much is known of Aden, for instance, from its maritime aspect, but comparatively little is known of its relation to its hinterland. Both Aden and Shihr are, from the point of view of the inhabitants of the southern districts of Arabia, the end of caravan routes and the gateway to a world beyond.

Shihr serves a relatively limited hinterland, though at periods when international commerce placed more reliance than normal on internal caravan routes, and this can have been but rarely,

* This paper was prepared for the Colloquium of October 1968, but since then new publications relevant to it have appeared, notably G. TIBBETTS, *Arab navigation*, London, 1971, and a series of articles by Captain H. Grosset-Grange. The texts of the Arab dhow-masters published in facsimile by G. Ferrand are now appearing in Damascus in printed editions. The suggestion (p. 198) that Aden was returning to tribal rule seemed correct in 1969, but a swing of the political pendulum later that year brought in a different type of government and some measure of indirect foreign control.

Digitized by Google
Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

the port and the tracks leading from it probably assumed a greater importance. Nevertheless even at the time of the Quraish caravans which went to South Arabia in the winter, and to Northern Arabia in the summer, as indeed is well known, Shihr can scarcely have been their main entrepôt for acquiring imports from the Far East. Aden would surely be the southern terminus of any north-south caravan route. It serves a much more important hinterland than Shihr, the far richer country of the Yemen, but there are times when it has been nearly deserted, as in 1839 when it was captured by the British.

Trade patterns change of course, but the well-known account of the pre-Islamic fairs of the Arabs gives the picture of merchants setting off from northern Arabia, passing down the Persian Gulf, rounding the eastern capes of Oman by Ṣuḥār, Dabā, and Shihr, to Aden, Ṣan'ā', etc., and arriving eventually in the Hejaz at the famous fair of 'Ukāẓ. Rūmī, i.e. Greek, and Indian merchants are specifically mentioned as taking part in this trade-cycle. The account of the Arab authors makes no mention of the trade from the Arabian Peninsula to East Africa which is both ancient and continuous. The patterns of the trade-cycles were of course dictated by the monsoons, and they can be reconstructed from the pilot books of Ibn Mājid as they were in the 15th century of our era.

From the political aspect it may be said that the southern provinces of the Arabian Peninsula have always been subject to tribal law, varied occasionally with the super-imposition of foreign rule by such nations or groups as the Persians, Mamelukes, Ottoman Turks, and the British. From Yemeni and Ḥaḍramī histories it is clear that, in one form or another, the tribes controlled both Aden and Shihr which they milked to their advantage until the arrival of the British made a most radical change in freeing these ports from the tribal domination to which they now appear to be returning. Even under the Rasūlid monarchs about whose administration we know most

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

in detail, Aden usually had a garrison of such as the Yāfi'ī tribe. When tribes like the 'Abdalīs held Aden they battened on the port revenues; when the Rasūlids ruled it they diverted them to their own treasuries. I have quoted an Arab poet who says, "Ta'izz is the capital of the Yemen; its taxes are derived from Aden."

The most important political element in Ḥaḍramawt has always been that which held Shihr, and later Mukallā, such as at one time, the Kathīrī Sultans, and until 1967 the Qu'aiṭī Sultans, one of whom was described as *qābiḍ al-ḥanjūr*, i.e. the grasper of the throat, because by holding Shihr he could throttle the commerce of the country. When the ruler of Aden was sufficiently powerful he would try to extend his control of the coastal ports eastwards to Shihr and even Zufar so as to share at least in the dues they collected from the shipping to and from India, but, in general, rulers like the Rasūlids and 16th century Ottomans were content to receive a simple fixed levy to be paid them by the local rulers, along with certain articles in kind. In the Middle Ages, as also in an Ottoman document from Jeddah published about five years ago, the ports east of Aden are known as Bilād al-Tafārīq, a term about which I cannot be certain as yet, but from the Arabic it would seem to mean originally the ports upon which a levy of tax or contribution to a central exchequer (in Rasūlid times at Aden and Ta'izz) was apportioned out.

Similarly, the tribes controlling the long southern coast-line no doubt thought of vessels using the sea highway, apart from country craft, as lawful booty when cast ashore, though there may have been a native customary law form of salvage agreement, as there certainly was in recent times, but if so the law may have fluctuated in its application depending on whether a centralised goverment controlled the coast or local tribes were able to take the law into their own hands.

Though tribesmen do sometimes participate in seafaring

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

activities the bulk of the coastal population which wins its livelihood from the sea is not tribal but subject to the tribes or sultans, as in the case of the fishermen, though I am uncertain at present on the extent to which the dhow sailors are subject to the tribes. There is a well established maritime customary law around the Arabian coasts of which as yet I know only a part, and disputes seem to be settled by the official known as Amīr al-Baḥr and by ships' captains among themselves, as I think I said in the paper I gave at Beirut in 1966. The Amīr al-Baḥr is an office still in operation in, for instance, the Saudi port of Jizan, and perhaps in Mocha and other little ports in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. It is however inferior, or subordinate to that of the office of Governor in the port, to whom the Amīr al-Baḥr refers disputes that lie beyond his competence to handle.

The old town of Aden was situated in the Crater which, being ringed about with mountains, was immensely strong. Along the one exposed side, the sea-front, it had a wall with gates which was still there, though it seems ruinous, when the British captured it. There was a cutting through the rock wall to Tawahi, called Main Pass by the British, but Tawahi does not seem to have had much importance until after 1839. The mountains surrounding Aden were fortified as was Jabal Ṣīrah Island. Though all the mediaeval fortifications of Aden were replaced by magnificent Victorian masonry walls, a piece of mediaeval stone wall still remains on Ṣīrah Island in which a piece of mediaeval blue potsherd was found. The shore has been pushed forward with rubble, and, in the old town, to get at mediaeval Aden one has to excavate something like 20 feet if my memory be correct, or perhaps more. When the British took Aden it was a ruin and British engineers cleared the area without regard to archaeology. Early Victorian drawings show great flat open spaces, and modern Aden is practically entirely a British creation. Like all south Arabian towns Aden was

Digitized by Google

Original from
INDIANA UNIVERSITY

divided into quarters which would, I do not doubt, have an elaborate customary administration and law of their own, but if so all this has disappeared. In the older texts I have come across only Ḥāfat al-Hunūd, and Ḥāfat al-Yahūd, the Indian and Jewish Quarters, but the name of many quarters remains today in popular parlance in Aden such as Ḥāfat al-'Aidarūs, the Quarter of the (Saiyid Saint) the 'Aidarūs. Shihr however still retains its Quarters in full mediaeval form and vigour. In the mediaeval histories there are many foreign names and other evidence of the cosmopolitan nature of Aden population. Abū Makhramah mentions Shirazis who were going to East Africa but stayed in Aden, and other sources show there were plenty of Hindus, Jews, Africans, Persians, and others. When the British captured Aden in fact, among the 1200 inhabitants or so, the Arabs were a minority.

For the organisation of the port at Aden the *Mulakhkhaṣ al-fiṭan*, compiled in the early 15th century, but relating as much to the previous century, supplies detailed information which tallies very closely with the briefer account of Ibn al-Mujāwir — valuable though that is. The *Mulakhkhaṣ* supplies a list of Rasūlid government officials, some of whom were specifically concerned with the port. Some officers are included who had charge of the Sultan's trade. The trading was carried out on his own account by persons appointed by him for this purpose, and some of the names of these officials are preserved by the Egyptian author al-Sakhāwī. There were officials too who appear to have dealt in some way with the construction of shipping in Aden, with the watering of vessels calling in there, with slaves imported to the Yemen, with lighterage, and (if the text is taken with one reading), with the "Sea" perhaps like the Amīr al-Baḥr of more modern times, while the gates of Aden were controlled by other officials, no doubt for charging tolls and octroi or customs duties. Certain officials looked after the dakkāt, these being, I think, benches upon which goods were dumped to be

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

examined by customs officials.

The keys of the port and gates of Aden were kept in the house of the Governor, and issued to the appropriate officials each morning, but after the gates had been opened they were returned to the Governor along with their padlocks, but he would reissue both to the officials when the afternoon prayer was over, so that they could lock them up. There was an inspection of officials and troops each month at the *dakkah* of Dār al-Ṭawīlah. Slaves imported from the east or west, i.e. most likely the so-called Nubians or Swahili slaves, were brought in by the official called the 'Arīf of the Coast to the Governor, and then to the Inspector who selected those suitable for the *Dīwān*, i.e. Government Service. He would then write an order to release the remainder for sale to the general public or perhaps slave-brokers.

When a *nākhudhah* or ship's captain arrived from either direction, east or west, he was brought by the 'Arīf of the Coast to the Governor, and then to the Inspector to write down a *satmī*, a bill of lading, the word being Gujerati, so that they would known what he had brought on his vessel. Sheep imported from the African side, no doubt the well-known Barbarī sheep, were put in a special *zarībah* or compound, till the *Dīwān* had selected its share of them — the best of course! The port would be opened only in the presence of the Governor and officials. The Governor had all-over responsibility for all the accounts, and inspection had to be made in the port at the season when shipping arrived — perhaps the Indian fleet is intended here, or perhaps the smaller contingents from other countries also. All officials had to be present at the levying of the customs dues called *ta'shīr*. The regulations required that lists of duties payable had to be kept in the appropriate places, and important or perishable goods had to be dealt with promptly. Changes in the rates of duties were proclaimed, no doubt by heralds, at the Bāb al-Furḍah or Port Gate. In passing it might

Digitized by Google

Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

be mentioned that a pre-Islamic inscription with trade regulations is known from Timna' in the interior region of Baiḥān, and this seems also to have been near one of the gates of the town. The Inspector had to sign all travellers' (perhaps ships') passes which were then counter-signed by the Governor. Two heralds were appointed, one for the Governor, and another for the Inspector to announce the arrival of shipping. The Inspector was in charge of all documents which had to be sent into the Treasury, and the Treasury also had its officials in Aden. The control of the craft used in lighterage also came under the Inspector.

Of course changes do take place in the organisation of ports, but I should like to compare briefly the data I collected in 1967 at Qalansīyah, one of the little ports of Socotra island where the original system has probably never been modified by contact with the European powers which colonised the seaboard countries of the Indian Ocean.

Like other ports of the Arabian Penisula and adjacent territories, Qalansīyah has an Amīr al-Baḥr, an Emir of the Sea, whose duty it is to go out to the *nawkhudhā* of a newly arrived vessel and receive a manifest. The *nawkhudhā* accompanies him back to the shore and takes with him information as to the cargo brought by the vessel, and the list of goods the *nawkhudhā* wishes to buy or sell. A lesser official, the Muqaddam al-Baḥr attends to any dispute between the sea-captains and the canoes, used for lighterage, but if the affair becomes too difficult for him to settle, he takes the case to the local governor. This official, the Muqaddam al-Baḥr, assembles merchandise on the shore from the vessel, and transports merchandise from the shore to the vessel. Another Muqaddam — of the porterage — is responsible for moving goods to and from the houses or depot to the port. A law fixes the charges for these services. At Qalansīyah there is only one broker (*dallāl*), who has an official Government licence. He must produce a substitute or deputy to act

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

in his place if he should be absent from Qalansīyah. Only Socotran Government canoes may be used for lighterage. The broker deals with the merchants, informing the head of the Customs of the price and quality of the goods sold for export or import, and the Customs Officer collects the duty — called *'ushūr*, theoretically, at one time anyway, 10%, on the goods. The broker receives 1% on the sales to the outside world, and 2 1/2 % on imported goods.

In Aden, according to Qalqashandī, there was buying and selling on the beach, presumably in front of the old walls of Aden in which Bāb al-Furḍah, the Port Gate was set, but these walls seem to have disappeared entirely some time after the British conquest of Aden in 1839.

The times of arrival of shipping from the Red Sea, India and Africa were very precisely known in Aden, and this would apply also to Shihr. which Qalqashandī nevertheless describes as a tiny village. Qalqashandī points out that Aden has well-known seasons (*mawāsim*), both for shipping to put in to Aden, and to set sail from it. Moreover he says, "If a *nākhudhah* wants to voyage with a ship in any direction he runs up a flag with a badge special to it (he used the word *rank/rang* for badge, a Persian word) so that merchants know of his voyage and people hear from eachother of it." In the great European libraries there are several almanacs which would serve the utilitarian purpose of letting people know when to expect shipping from any particular quarter, and when that shipping would depart. The data they supply are to be found in more detailed and technical form in the writings of the pilot Ibn Mājid, but as these figured in almanacs, which also supply information on crops of some commercial significance, one is able to form a fair conception of the movements in Aden port. The almanacs present certain problems as to correct readings and I cannot date them more accurately than perhaps about the 15th century A.D., but attention must be drawn to the fact

Digitized by Google

Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

that they use a solar calendar, what is called in the Yemen, the Rūmī months, i.e. the Roman or Byzantine months, in fact the months of the oriental Christian calendar still used in the western districts of Southern Arabia, including the oasis of Lahej, to this day. In the table set out below I have made a sort of salad of the data from the almanacs I am editing, basing the text on the Milan Ms., but adding data from the British Museum Ms. and a few notes from the Vatican Ms.

The ports were of course keenly interested in ascertaining as soon as possible when shipping from any direction was approaching them. This was important as having an immediate effect on the prices of commodities, and the customary laws of convoy make provision for shipping to break convoy and speed ahead to reach the port in order to dispose of the cargoes before the new plenty makes the prices fall. We know that in Aden a look-out for sighting the arrival of vessels was kept on Jabal al-Manẓar, and that the watchman brought the news into the town at top-speed, being rewarded if his news were correct but punished if it were false. But something of this system was, I surmise, also to be found in Shihr, for when I was there in 1964 I discovered a well-marked path up the mountain behind the town and at a little distance from it, with traces of building on the top of the mountain. Again, I must point out that the Portuguese fort on Socotra Island, east of the town of Sūq, which was discovered by the Middle East Forces' Expedition of 1967 (of which I was a member) was sited on a projecting spur of mountain from which shipping could be seen approaching from either east or west. If the look-out at Aden had the almanacs (set out below) before him he would know what he could expect to see on the horizon.

Arrival and Departure Dates of Vessels at Aden

Tishrīn I, 10 The Mogadishan reaches Aden.
19 The first journey of the people of Zaila' from

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

		Aden with the Azyab monsoon to al-Maghārah. They return in the Shimāl monsoon.
	26	The Ẓafārī reaches Aden (i.e. from Ẓafār, east of Shihr).
Tishrīn II,	19	The sea is closed, no ships run. (The British Museum Ms. calls it the Salt Sea, probably the Red Sea, and the Vatican Ms., for the previous day, states that ships are raised on shore).
	21	Arrival of the Ẓafār ships at Aden (Brit. Mus. Ms. makes this the 20th).
	23	The Mogadishan reaches Aden.
Kānūn I,	17	Journey of the Mogadishan from Aden. (Brit. Mus. Ms. only).
	27	The Ẓafārī reaches Aden.
	31	The Mogadishan reaches Aden.
Kānūn II,	1	The Mogadishan reaches Aden (Vatican Ms. only).
Adhār	8	Last of the travel of India to Aden (Milan Ms. corrected by the Brit. Mus. Ms.).
	13	Ships run at sea.
	21	First journey of the Daimānī from Aden (Milan corrected by the Brit. Mus. Ms., which dates this as the 22nd.).
Nīsān	6	First journey of the Egyptian to Egypt (Perhaps one ought to substitute "from" for "of").
	10	The Egyptian and Indian reach Aden (Milan). Last of the journey of the reaching to Egypt (Brit. Mus.).
Aiyār	6	First journey of the Indian from Aden.
	24	Last journey of the Qaisī from Aden.
Ḥazīrān	3	The last of the journey of the Qaisī and Hurmuzī from Aden (Brit. Mus.).
	4	The end of the arrival of the Indian from Aden (Milan).

Digitized by Google

Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

		First of the journey of the Mogadishan from Aden (Brit. Mus.).
	6	Journey of the Mogadishan from Aden.
	26	Launching of Indian ships.
	29	First of the coming forth of B kārīyah from Egypt.
	30	Coming forth of the Makārim from Egypt to Aden (Brit. Mus.).
Tammūz	11	Indian ships set out from Aden.
	13	First arrival of the Makārim at Aden.
	27	Arrival of the Egyptian at Aden.
Āb	4	The Mogadishan sets out from Aden.
	18	The last journey of the Indian from Aden.
	20	Ceylonese and Somali journey from Aden.
	24	First of the journey of the Daimānī, the great journey.
Ailūl	1	First of the journey of al-Kārim from Aden and Mocha.
	3	Last journey of the Ẓafārī and Ḥaḍramī from Aden.
	6	Last of the journey of the Indian from Aden.
	13	The coming forth of the Hurmuzī, Barbarī, and Qalhātī from Aden (Brit. Mus. only).
	26	The Mogadishan comes forth from his land to Aden.
	28	The first Shihr ships reach Aden. (This notice is only to be found in the Vatican Ms. which adds the important note that this is the date known as Nairūz which I have discussed in my book on the Portuguese off the South Arabian coast).

The Daimānī wind comes from the south-west I was told in Zanzibar, where the Daimānī season seems to be September, October and November. I have not seriously attempted to

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

make the notices extracted from the almanacs *supra* harmonise. The names Makārim from Egypt, the B kāriyah also from Egypt, and al-Kārim, the last being doubtless the Kārimī merchants, might possibly all have been corrupt readings for the Kārimīs, had the name B kār not also occured in the *Mulakhkhaṣ al-Fiṭan*, an early 15th century work dated 1411-12 A.D. Possibly it is to be derived from an Indian word meaning a trader, but I prefer meanwhile to leave the matter open question.

The description of the customs at Aden during the period of the Banū Zurai', i.e. the 6th century H./12th century A.D., has long been known from Ibn al-Mujāwir's account, which includes modifications made to the tariff up to his own day, the middle of the 13th century A.D. It is to a Jew, said to be of Nehavend, a city of the inland province of Jibāl in Persia, that the setting up of the Zurai'id tariff is ascribed. Of course the designation of Nehavend may only pertain to his family which could have been long settled in Aden. A tax called *shawānī*, literally "galleys", was introduced during the Aiyūbid period to provide guard ships against pirates, these vessels being stationed near points where shipping made its landfalls. At first the Government had paid for the maintenance of these guard-vessels, but in 613 H./1216-17 A. D. the charge was transferred to the merchants and became an additional item of tax. This charge figures in the early 15th century *Mulakhkhaṣ al-fiṭan* — on certain items, and the same work records a number of modifications made to the customs dues at certain dates in the 14th century A.D. Ibn al-Mujāwir puts the number of vessels anchoring under Jabal Ṣīrah 70 to 80 per annum. This is to be compared with the smaller figure for Mocha even at its height of importance, as given below, though conditions may have changed during the period of the coffee-boom, i.e. in the 18th century.

Ibn al-Mujāwir reports that, prior to his day, when the practice seems to have fallen into disuse, four chests of revenue were

Digitized by Google

Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

sent at four times in the year from Aden port to Ta'izz fort — these were the proceeds from the customs on the arrival of the Indian trade fleet, the tax on madder arriving in Aden for export, the tax on horses going from Aden to India, and the tax on the voyage of ships to India. Each consignment of these four was worth about 150,000 dīnārs, more or less. The horse-trade reference is strange as Aden is not noted for horses, but it may have been an assembly point for them. Ibn al-Mujāwir states that a rigid body-search was carried out of all persons on the ships, women even being examined by a woman searcher to a most undignified extent, for the customs duties in Aden were exacted with the utmost severity.

The statistics provided by the *Mulakhkhaṣ al-fiṭan* for the period about 1400 A.D. are very enlightening. From the ports they controlled the Rasūlids received a total sum of 2,320,500 *dīnārs*, of which the port of Aden furnished 1,470,000 *dīnārs*, and Ẓafār no less than 420,000 *dīnārs*. Shihr provided 200,000 dīnārs, Jeddah 100,000 *dīnārs*, and Zabīd 50,000 *dīnārs* only. Each port also furnished a certain number of commodities in kind — one finds this was also a custom in the early 'Abbasid empire in Iraq.

The decline in the trade of the south Arabian ports was no doubt in part due to the discovery of the Cape route to Europe, though it may have been partially due to the rapacity of the Ottoman governors. A note on the fly-leaf of the Istanbul Ms, of Ibn al-Mujāwir says that Mocha had at one time 40 to 70 ships putting in to it, and provided a revenue of 15,000 *ḥasanah* — *sikkah ḥasanah* is no doubt meant, but by 1005 H./1596-7 A.D. only 17 to 20 vessels put in, no more. (This may have been altered again by the expansion of the coffee trade later). The writer of the note adds that at this period only a ship or two puts into Aden, small Malabar ships, and to such points as Tawahi, i.e. not mediaeval Aden-Crater — the town is ruined!

Shihr, nowadays a walled town, lies along a sandy beach and

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

the shipping calling in there simply anchors in the roads. It is divided into two parts by the flood-stream bed — al-Misyāl, and to the west nowadays lies the Majraf Quarter, i.e. the place of the large nets known as *jarīf*, and to the east lies al-Ramlah Quarter, the sand (shore) quarter where fish may be dried. There are many quarters beside these, and the oldest is the Qaryah Quarter — this means simply a village or town, and must be the original Shihr one would suppose. In it at one time was a market known as Sūq al-Khān but it is not known nowadays. There are however markets called Sūq al-Lakham, the Shark Market, Sūq al-Hunūd, the Indian Market, and Sūq Shibām, presumably this last being named after the inland trading city of Shibām. There can be few if any Indians nowadays in the Indian Market. Though the other quarters of Shihr are interesting in their historical and contemporary aspects this has little bearing on Shihr as a port. Fishing is still an important aspect of life in the town and fish is exported, it being prepared in special yards known as *ḥawsh*. The fishermen are organised under headmen, and their customary law runs from al-Ma'īnah to the west of the town right up to al-Mudawwarah to the east of it. I imagine that in this area local maritime law also follows Shihr custom. The long open shore in front of the town on which fishing and maritime operations are carried out has graves dotted on it here and there said to be those of martyrs killed by the Portuguese, but in one of the quarters of the town itself is a sort of little oratory known as the grave of the Seven Martyrs, though the historical data I have published suggest that actually there were only six persons killed by the Portuguese. On the shore in the older part of Shihr above the high-water mark are clay banks showing some stratification — the foundations of old houses, for Shihr is a clay city, with mediaeval pottery and glass sherds, bracelets and bottles. In 1948 I picked up a considerable deal of Chinese and Persian material there which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Digitized by Google

Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Unfortunately I know very little about the customs organisation at Shihr which has, in any case, to some extent been modified by the British, but there is a Customs-House on or near the beach, and certain exports of fish are taxed. The Mukallā Government has a tariff which will apply to Shihr, and though it is modified by the influence of the British Resident it doubtles has still certain traces of the Middle Ages. The maritime activities nowadays seem to be controlled by the fisher muqaddams and few vessels call there, only occasional country dhows. Fishing and navigational law is elaborate, but I have dealt with some of this at the previous conference in Beirut in 1966. There are arrangements for turning out the people of the quarters to deal with emergencies on the shore. Fish-oil and *lubān*-incense which comes from the upper parts of the mountains in Shihr region are still commodities handled there, and in 1948 there was still some weaving of the *subā'ī* cloth though the yarn used was imported from India. In the 19th century the port declined as al-Mukallā replaced it as the port of the Ḥaḍramī coast, and added a number of large new town quarters to the original small nucleus on the peninsula there. Conditions in al-Mukallā today with its resident Indian and Somali population, as traders and seamen, may very well have been similar in Shihr before its decline, its population now being mainly what might be described as Arab. It was from Shihr that Ḥaḍramīs used to travel to East Africa where they were called by the generic name of Shihiri. Popular religion includes many strange customs connected with the maritime occupation of the local people.

It ought to be possible, by studying south Arabian literature on legal decisions to arrive at a very fair picture of how business was conducted in the mediaeval period. I have attempted this to some extent for the Portuguese period, but it would not be invalid to project back into the past some of the conditions obtaining in south Arabia at the present time. Take for example

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

the *wakīl* or agent-trustee. *Wakīls* are to be found among the merchants and shopkeepers of Aden. A man leaving Aden or the Yemen for, say East Africa, would ask some shopkeeper, normally hailing from his own village, to supply his family with provisions and clothing etc. during his absence. The shopkeeper charges no service on this, but the man will send back sums of money from time to time, often with some person who is travelling back to Aden. The *wakīl* will look at his account with the man and deduct the payment made him from the debt outstanding. In older days communication between a man working in Aden and his family back in the village was through the *jammāl* or camel-owner who always travelled at least once a month between Aden and a certain district in the Yemen. These men would collect all the remittances (*taṣādīr*), i.e. goods sent by the man to the Yemen — this is derived from the Arabic phrase "*Ṣadar lak ṣadar maqramah wa-maṣar*, To you I have sent a supply of one shawl and scarf." The *jammāl* would return with the acknowledgement receipt called *ta'rīf*.

In Aden itself, and no doubt in Shihr there would be *wakīls* for the various races and even ports trading along the Indian Ocean-Red Sea route. A very complicated state of affairs existed, probably still exists, whereby an individual would entrust some person with goods to sell in some foreign port, the seller to purchase goods there with the money and bring them back to the individual in question. These ventures could lead to endless trouble and complications, given the insecurity prevailing in those days, and the slow communication, to say nothing of greater hazards of weather and disease.

Internally goods are conveyed to and from Aden and Shihr up country mainly by camel, but in the Yemen mountains donkeys are commonly used, and mules, though camels are everywhere of course. So what can be carried is limited, the camel's load being the standard weight of 300 lbs. the *buhār*, though the *buhār* can vary. Weights and measures vary greatly,

Digitized by Google

Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

even as between one town and the next. While the trade of the cities makes use of coinage, the shortage of coinage in the countryside makes barter a normal method of trading in many places — the war in the Yemen from 1962 onwards has resulted in the influx of much gold and silver coinage into south Arabia but this is utterly abnormal, and until that date gold was extremely scarce, and gold coins only to be found ornamenting the dagger-handles of Sultans and chiefs. The Venetian sequin or copies of it were used. The standard coinage was silver, in the post-mediaeval period the Maria Theresa dollar, and perhaps its popularity is in part due to the fact that it weighs exactly an ounce. It is not to be imagined however that silver was ever very abundant in the hinterland of the ports and large towns, and gold would be very uncommon. All these problems, the variety of weights and measures, difficulties arising from coinage shortages or inconsistencies, make the craft of the *dallāl* or broker-intermediary an extremely important function. In the inland cities of Ḥaḍramawt he used even to collect the sales taxes for the Sultans and I suspect that the *dallāls* did this in mediaeval Shihr.

I might perhaps add here that I once found a Mameluke copper coin at Ḥabīl above Lahej in mediaeval pottery spoil, and I think much foreign coinage must have been used in Aden and Shihr. To hark back before Islam however, in the Sabaean tomb I opened in Aden in 1941 there were no gold coins at all, only silver, though there were golden nose and ear-rings for women. I have also seen little pieces of silver sheeting cut into small squares, as mentioned in the *Periplus*, used as coinage.

South Arabia had not a great many exports — some textiles such as the famous Yemeni ikated cloth, some of it cotton, some silk, madder which was evidently important, incense from Shihr (*lubān*), and fish of course from the same port at all times up to the present. Semi-precious stones worked by the Jews came from the north, and perhaps some metal-ware. Glass,

Digitized by Google Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

especially polychrome bangles was manufactured in some places on the Tihāmah coast but there seems to be no allusion to these factories in the *Mulakhkhaṣ al-fiṭan* though one of them is quite near Aden. My own impression is that south Arabia was largely self-sufficient economically. Its greatest export in fact was men as it is today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Admiralty, Hydrographic Department. *Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Pilot*, 10th edit,. London, 1958.

Ferrand (G.), *Instructions nautiques et routiers arabes et portugais*, Paris, 1921-28.

Grosset-Grange (H.), La navigation arabe de jadis, *Institut français de navigation*. Avril et Octobre, 1969, 227-36 & 437-48.

Hourani (F.), *Arab seafaring in the Indian Ocean in ancient and mediaeval times*, Princeton, 1951.

'Īsā al-Quṭāmī. Al-Mukhtaṣar al-khāṣṣ li-'l-musāfir wa-'l-ṭawwāsh wa-'l-ghawwāṣ, Baghdād, 1924-5 (1343 H.).

Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Descriptio Arabiae Meridionalis... Ta'rīḫ al-Mustabṣir*, edit O. Löfgren, Leiden, 1951.

Johnstone (T. M.) & Muir (J.), "Some nautical terms in the Kuwaitī dialect of Arabic". *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies*, London, 1964, xxvii, ii, 299-332.

Rāshid b. Fāḍil b. Saif b. Alī b. 'Alī, *Majārī al-hidāyah*, al-Baḥrain, 1923 A.D. (1341 H.).

Serjeant (R. B.), *Maritime customary law in the Indian Ocean*, in : Sociétés et compagnies de commerce en Orient et dans l'Océan Indien, *Actes du 8ème Colloque International d'Histoire Maritime* (Beyrouth, 5-10 September 1966), Paris, 1970.

Serjeant (R. B.), *The Portuguese off the south Arabian coast*, Oxford, 1963.

Shumovsky (T. A.), *Tri neizvestnye Lotsii Akhmadae Ibn Mādzhida, Arabskogo Lotsmana Vasco da-Gama*, Moscow, 1957.

Villiers (Alan), *Sons of Sindbad*, London-New York, 1940.

Digitized by Google

Original from INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google
Original from
INDIANA UNIVERSITY